Survey Data Elements to Unpack Diversity of Hispanic Populations

The Hispanic community represents the nation's largest ethnic minority group, accounting for more than half of the nation's growth over the past decade. According to the 2010 Census, there were 50.5 million Hispanics in the United States, making up 16.3 percent of the total population. There were 17.1 million Hispanic children ages 17 and younger, or 23.1 percent of this age group. It is predicted that one out of every four Americans will be of Hispanic heritage by the year 2050.

The Hispanic population is quite diverse in terms of national origin and history, racial identification, reason for migration, and proficiency in the English language. These differences create intercultural variation across different Hispanic groups as well as considerable intracultural variation within groups. Given the extraordinary diversity of Hispanics, it is important that service systems increase their capacity and understanding of this population.

The mission of the Administration of Children and Families (ACF), a division of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), is "to foster health and well-being by providing federal leadership, partnership and resources for the compassionate and effective delivery of human services."[1] ACF programs target services for children and families to promote their economic and social well-being. The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) within ACF leads research efforts designed to improve ACF programs. These efforts include evaluations of existing programs and innovative approaches to helping low-income children and families, as well as descriptive and exploratory studies.

The grouping "Hispanic" often makes it challenging to observe important social experiences that relate strongly to the needs, service experiences, and outcomes of interest to ACF for various Hispanic subgroups.

Why do we need additional demographic survey items?

Many Hispanic families and individuals are either being served by ACF programs or are in need of ACF services. Among children enrolled in Head Start, 34 percent are of Hispanic origin.[2] In the child welfare system, about 21 percent of the children in foster care are of Hispanic origin[3] and 21 percent of the children confirmed as victims of maltreatment are Hispanic.[4] Approximately 30 percent of families who are TANF recipients are Hispanic.[5] Outcomes relevant to ACF – which span a full range of health, behavioral, economic,

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[1] For more information about the Administration for Children and Families please visit: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/

[2] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2011). *Head Start Program Information Report for the 2009-2010 Program Year, National Level Survey Summary Report.*

[3] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2012). *AFCARS (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting) Report. Preliminary FY 2011 Estimates as of July 2012 (19)*. Retrieved from: www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/

[4] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2011). *Child maltreatment 2010*. Retrieved from: www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/

[5] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2012). *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients, Fiscal Year 2010*. Retrieved from: www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa

and social experiences – not only vary by program but also across and within target populations. Because of this variation, it is important to collect data that allows for the examination of the unique experiences of subpopulations and how these experiences may relate to outcomes of interest. The grouping "Hispanic" often makes it challenging to observe important social experiences that relate strongly to the needs, service experiences, and outcomes of interest to ACF for various Hispanic subgroups. Existing federal surveys do not consistently collect data to sufficiently examine the experiences of this population in detail. Because the current measurement is inadequate, there is a need to better differentiate characteristics within the Hispanic population for research and evaluation purposes.

Alongside the demographic items that are typically collected (e.g., race, ethnicity, household income, level of education) in federal research surveys, **the ten additional data elements described below will allow more adequate understanding of the diversity within low-income, Hispanic populations.** These elements will help to unpack the heterogeneity within low-income, Hispanic populations in the U.S. in order to improve understanding of how Hispanic ethnicity interacts with other socio-cultural experiences as well as how it relates to specific outcomes of interest to ACF. More generally, the ten elements can offer guidance for improving demographic data about U.S. Hispanic populations in federally sponsored surveys as well as other relevant studies.

Process for Identifying Priority Data Elements for Core Survey Module

In 2011 and 2012, OPRE convened a Hispanic Research Work Group[6] to assist ACF in identifying research priorities concerning low-income, Hispanic families. Work Group discussions suggested that an additional survey module would better differentiate the diversity

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[6] ACF's Hispanic Research Work Group brings together researchers and practitioners who have substantial experience working with Hispanic communities and/or contribute significant scholarship to the current understanding of social contexts, service needs and service utilization among Hispanic families in the U.S.

within low‐income, Hispanic populations in OPRE surveys and other studies. Further discussions yielded a set of demographic questions related to Hispanic populations appropriate for inclusion in large‐scale federal survey studies (in addition to the standard demographic questions), particularly for use in research conducted by OPRE/ACF to develop and improve programs for children and families

ACF research frequently examines outcomes that relate to ACF goals of promoting economic and social well‐being. These outcomes may include: receipt of services, employment, earnings and income, home environment, quality of care and educational environment, child cognitive and socio-emotional development, parent-child interactions, father involvement, and relationship quality. Given ACF's areas of concern and existing research regarding relevant outcomes among Hispanic children and families, OPRE has worked with members of ACF's Hispanic Research Work Group to prioritize ten data elements for a core survey module that can support examining the diverse socio-cultural experiences among Hispanic populations in the U.S. and how these experiences relate to social and economic well-being.

Description of Recommended Data Elements and Illustrative Survey Items

The data elements are intended for use as a complementary (i.e., in addition to standard demographics already being collected) module to be incorporated in large‐scale survey studies across ACF content areas, especially studies that intend to consider the experiences of different ethnic/cultural subgroups. This includes descriptive and evaluative research. Although the elements were identified primarily for use in research conducted by OPRE, the elements may be useful for other federal research. The data elements, displayed in the table below, are identified as the highest priority data elements to be added to surveys, while adding no more than 5 minutes to the survey

administration time.[7] The survey questions presented here are examples of items that can capture each data element. Many of the illustrative items have been validated as part of existing federally sponsored surveys. However, more testing is needed to ensure each item accurately captures the intended construct, as written, within various survey instruments, and in different modes of administration. Similarly, Spanish versions of most of the items are available and should be vetted and tested to ensure that translated items reliably elicit the information they are designed to obtain with Spanish-speakers of different national origins.

Highest Priority Data Elements To Unpack Diversity of Hispanic Populations

Data Element[8]	Underlying Construct	Illustrative Survey Item[9]
		It is assumed that survey instrument includes item to elicit if respondent is of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin prior to these.
Hispanic ancestry/heritage subgroup	Cultural background, demographics	**What is your ancestry or ethnic origin?** [Print groups/origins.] _____ *(For example: Cuban, Dominican, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Italian, Jamaican, African-American, Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, and so on.)* *Source: American Community Survey (ACS)*
Country of birth (of respondent, focal child, and parents of focal child, if not respondent)	Demographics, cultural, contextual	**Where were you born?** • In the United States – *Print name of state:* _____ • Outside the United States – *Print name of foreign country, or Puerto Rico, Guam, etc.:* _____ *Source: ACS*
Parental countries of birth (of respondent or of parents of focal child, if not respondent)	Cultural background, institutional access	**In what country was your (a) mother, (b) father born?** [LIST COUNTRIES] *Source: California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), Current Population Survey (CPS), Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES)*
U.S. citizenship status	Social position, resources, institutional access	**Are you a citizen of the United States?** • Yes, born in the United States • Yes, born in Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or Northern Marianas. • Yes, born abroad of U.S. citizen parent or parents • Yes, U.S. citizen by naturalization – *Print year of naturalization* _____ • No, not a U.S. citizen *Source: ACS, National Study of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW)*

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[7] ACF's Hispanic Research Work Group discussions identified several other data elements that are particularly important for understanding experiences of Hispanic populations related to social and economic well-being, but those were not prioritized for a 5-minute survey module.
[8] The data elements are listed in no particular order.
[9] These survey items are included for illustrative purposes only. Each data element can be captured in several different ways and in many cases, multiple alternatives are available. In cases where acceptable alternatives are currently used in major federally sponsored surveys, these are included. Self-report versions of items are presented.

Time in U.S. (for individuals born outside of the U.S.)	Acculturation, institutional access, proxy for legal residency status	*[If respondent indicated he/she was born outside US:]* **When did you come to live in the United States?** *Print numbers in boxes.* YEAR: _____ *Source: ACS, CPS*
Language(s) spoken at home	Language proficiency, acculturation, institutional access	**Do you speak a language other than English at home?** YES/NO *[If YES:]* What is this language? _____ *For example: Spanish, Korean, Italian.* *Source: ACS, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)*
English speaking proficiency	Acculturation, institutional access	*[If respondent indicated he/she speaks a language other than English:]* **How well do you speak English?** • Very well • Well • Not well • Not at all *Source: ACS*
Literacy (reading/writing) in any language (of languages spoken)	Acculturation, social position	*[If respondent indicated he/she speaks a language other than English:]* **Which language did you learn first?** _____ **How well do you <u>read</u> your first language? Would you say…** • Very well • Well • Not well • Not at all **How well do you <u>write</u> your first language? Would you say…** *(Same response options as above.)* *Source: Hispanic Research Work Group*
Highest educational level attained outside of the U.S. (for individuals born outside of the U.S.)	Demographics, cultural, contextual	**How many years of education have you completed?** _____ YEARS *[For respondents who indicated they were born outside U.S.:]* **How many of those were in your country of birth?** _____ YEARS *Source: Hispanic Research Work Group*

Note: **Given the sensitivity of the following question, the decision to include it should be made within the context of each study. For example, it might not be critical to collect data on legal status given the research questions; there may be proxies for legal status that are more appropriate or relevant; or survey administration procedures and features might heighten sensitivity to providing this information. If this data is collected, it is critical to obtain a Certificate of Confidentiality and to implement ample privacy protections.**

Legal residency status (for individuals who previously responded "No, not a U.S. citizen")	Institutional access, social position, household stability	**Are you a permanent resident with a green card? Your answers are confidential and will not be reported to Immigration Services.** [If needed, say: *People usually call this a "Green Card" but the color can also be pink, blue, or white.*] YES/NO *Source: CHIS*

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